

## LETTER TO EU Council working group and Commission

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to you on behalf of the European Commission funded Concerted Action entitled “Sustaining Animal Health and Food Safety in Organic Farming” (SAFO). In this network more than 25 research organisations and universities from old and new states participated (see next page). The main objective of SAFO was to improve food safety and animal health in organic livestock production systems through active communication of research results. A further objective was to support the process of development and implementation of EU-standards (Regulation 1804/1999 amending 2092/91) in the diverse climate of agricultural production systems. For further information about SAFO see [www.safonetwork.org](http://www.safonetwork.org).

In its final meeting (1 June 2006) the SAFO network considered the draft for a new Regulation on Organic Farming that was presented by Kim Boesen from the Organic Farming Unit of DG Agriculture. The network welcomed the process of revision of the Regulation. For the current round of negotiations we would like to draw your attention to some of the conclusions and recommendations from the SAFO network in relation to standards.

A survey among the participating organisation about standards showed a lack of knowledge and education about disease prevention under the conditions of organic livestock production among organic livestock farmers, advisers and veterinarians, which could be one of the reasons for violations of the standards, set in 2092/91 in relation to livestock that were found. Reaching a high animal health status on farms without the routine use of medication, as required by the organic standards, demands a high level of skill in managing livestock as well as additional labour and capital resources. Members of the SAFO project would therefore like to see a greater emphasis on animal health and disease prevention in the new regulation both in the principles of farming and in the rules of livestock production. We would further like to see the standards requiring each organic livestock unit to develop an animal health plans as currently already implemented in the UK. Such health plans should identify risk factors and outline strategies to improve or maintain a good health status of all animals.

Please find attached the final SAFO report on standards that is currently in press<sup>1</sup>[1]. It discusses some aspects of the current EU Regulation 2092/91 that are likely to have an impact on animal health, summarises literature findings in relation to the health status on organic farms and presents our conclusions (p. 82), recommendations for standard development (p. 83) and some comments on certain articles of the draft for total revision published by the European Commission in December (p. 85).

We respectfully ask you to consider our suggestions in the forthcoming negotiations.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr Mette Vaarst  
SAFO project Coordinator

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<sup>1</sup>[1] Future perspective for animal health on organic farms: main findings, conclusions and recommendations from SAFO Network. Proceedings of the 5th SAFO Workshop  
1 June 2006, Odense, Denmark (C. Rymer, M. Vaarst and S. Padel Eds.). Reading University.

## **SAFO partners & organizations (<http://www.safonetwork.org/>)**

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